

## Measles

### What is measles?

Measles (aka, rubeola, red measles or hard measles) is a very contagious viral illness that can be prevented by vaccination. Usually it causes a rash, high fever, cough, runny nose and watery eyes. The disease lasts one to two weeks. Measles may be complicated by an ear infection or pneumonia. Other less common complications include deafness, blindness, seizure disorders, swelling of the brain, and death. Approximately one child in every 10,000 who gets measles dies from it.

### Who gets this disease?

- Anyone who never had measles and has not been vaccinated.
- Children less than 12 months of age, who are too young to have been vaccinated
- Adults who were vaccinated before 1968, because some early vaccines did not give lasting protection.

Adults born prior to 1957 are generally considered to be immune against measles.

### How is it spread?

**Measles is one of the most easily spread infectious diseases.** The virus that causes measles is produced in the nose and throat and is sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks. People nearby can then inhale the virus. Measles is also spread by direct contact with the nasal or throat secretions of infected persons from touching soiled tissues or sharing a cup used by an infected person. People with measles can spread the disease from 4 days before to 4 days after the start of rash.

### What are the symptoms?

The first symptoms of measles, which appear approximately 10 days after a person is exposed to someone with measles, are similar to the common cold: cough, runny nose, fever greater than 101°F, and red and watery eyes. A few days after these cold-like symptoms appear, a rash develops, typically beginning on the face and then spreading downward over the entire body. This rash lasts 4-7 days.

## How common is measles?

Measles is very common in developing countries. An estimated 43 million cases occur yearly, with more than 1 million deaths. In the United States, about 350 cases are reported each year. Most of these cases are in people who became infected in other countries.

## How can the spread of this disease be prevented?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that children receive their first dose of measles-containing vaccine between 12 to 15 months of age. Children 15 months and older are required to have one dose of measles vaccine for daycare and school admittance. A second dose of measles vaccine is given between ages 4-6.

Certain groups of adults may be at increased risk of exposure to measles and should receive special consideration for vaccination. These include college students, childcare workers, healthcare workers, and international travelers.

As is the case with all vaccinations, there are important exceptions regarding who should receive the vaccine. These exceptions should be discussed with your healthcare provider.

## If I have measles, can I go to work/school?

Children and adults with suspected or confirmed measles infection shall be excluded from the school or work for at least four days after the appearance of the rash.

## Is it reportable?

Yes. Measles is reportable **immediately** by New Hampshire law to the Division of Public Health Service's Bureau of Disease Control and Health Statistics. Telephone: 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345, ext. 4496; call for recommendations and assistance about prevention and spread of this illness.